

For immediate release

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**Scrap Metal Moratorium Proves Successful as
U.S. EPA Takes Stand to Impact Air Conditioner Thefts**

Building upon the successful scrap metal moratorium enacted by Columbus and Franklin County officials last month, the Columbus Division of Police is working with the United States Environmental Protection Agency and Crime Stoppers to continue to curb air conditioning thefts. Today at 3 pm at the Columbus Police Training Academy, the Columbus Division of Police will meet with local scrap metal facilities and other law enforcement agencies to discuss these efforts.

“Our effort to combat air conditioner thefts has been a great success due to outstanding collaboration among the public and private sector and most importantly, the residents of the City of Columbus,” said Mayor Michael B. Coleman. “As the price of scrap metal rises, police will continue to focus on thieves who prey on our places of worship, our businesses and residents.”

Last month, Mayor Coleman was joined by Councilmember Michelle Mills, Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien, Columbus Division of Police, the local members of the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries and Nationwide Insurance to announce a voluntary 30-day moratorium on the purchase of air conditioner units and parts by Columbus area scrap metal facilities in order to combat a plague of air conditioner thefts.

“Although the moratorium is over, I urge residents to be proactive by taking the necessary steps to protect their air conditioner unit,” said Councilmember Michelle M. Mills, chair of the Safety Committee.

The EPA issued a letter May 16 affirming certain air conditioning Clean Air Act obligations of scrap metal facilities and persons who disassemble air conditioners. This requires sellers of air conditioner units to either remove refrigerant or require from the seller a signed statement that the refrigerant has already been properly removed before the scrap metal facility may purchase the air conditioner. These federal obligations “apply to any component of an appliance that contains or once contained refrigerant, including copper tubing, even if that component is no longer connected to the appliance as a whole.” Failure on the part of persons who disassemble air conditioners and the scrap metal facility which fail to obtain the necessary certifications with this requirement subjects the violator to civil penalties of up to \$37,500 per day, per violation, criminal fines and possible imprisonment.

Columbus Police data confirms a 69 percent reduction in reported air conditioner thefts during the moratorium. From November 1 to April 11, police averaged 20.3 reports per week. During the moratorium, April 12 to May 13, police averaged 6.25 reports per week.

Crime Stoppers of Central Ohio, Nationwide Insurance and the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries is also offering a reward of up to \$1000 for any information leading to the arrest of persons responsible for air conditioner thefts.

During the moratorium, a vigorous public outreach campaign was conducted to better inform the public, especially churches, on how to better prevent the thefts of air conditioner units. All residents are encouraged to:

- Mark air conditioner units and copper parts with ultraviolet ink markings;
- Cut back trees and shrubs from units;
- Enclose the unit in a metal cage or secure to a concrete pad; and
- Install a new or link the unit to an existing security system.